DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 304 CE 075 168

AUTHOR	Maruatona, Tonic
TITLE	Reflections on Freirean Pedagogy and the Transformation of Rural Botswana.
PUB DATE	1996-03-00
NOTE	14p.; Paper presented at the World Conference on Literacy (Philadelphia, PA, March 1996). For other papers from this conference, see CE 075 171, 173, 180, 183, 191 and CS 012 996, CS 013 000, 002.
AVAILABLE FROM	Thirty-three selected papers from this conference are available on the "Literacy Online" Web site: http://www.literacyonline.org
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; Adult Educators; *Adult Literacy; Community Development; Developing Nations; Economic Development; Educational Benefits; Educational Change; Educational Needs; Educational Principles; Educational Theories; Foreign Countries; National Programs; *Role of Education; Rural Areas; *Rural Education; *Social Change; *Student Empowerment; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	*Botswana; *Freire (Paulo)

ABSTRACT

Despite Botswana's commitment to the ideals of democracy and equity, abject and relative poverty are widespread among the country's rural populace. Since Botswana's independence, its rates of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy have increased. The situation necessitates fundamental changes in the lives of Botswana's rural residents. Such change can be achieved by adopting the Freirean method for Botswana's National Literacy Program. Botswana's present literacy practice does not facilitate criticism of adult learners' current situation or their assumption of the role of agents of change. Freire's methods would enable Botswana's rural literacy learners to engage in democratic practice as Botswana's other citizens do. It has been argued that Botswana's government has skillfully chosen some nonpolitical aspects of the Freirean approach for the Botswana National Literacy Program. Adult educators in Botswana must challenge their students to address the problems in their world. Since its independence, Botswana has had several viable democratic institutions, including the community meeting place and the tradition of farmers working in groups, that can be mobilized to address the social and economic plight of the country's rural residents. Through such institutions, the Freirean approach may be used to empower rural people. (29 references) (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 416 304

ITERACY ONLINE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1996 WORLD CONFERENCE ON LITERACY

REFLECTIONS ON FREIREAN PEDAGOGY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL BOTSWANA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Tonic Maruatona
Lecturer in the Department of Adult Education,
at the
University of Botswana

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T Maruatona

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

| Abstract| Introduction | Background | Adult Literacy in Rural Botswana | Freirean Pedagogy and Methods | Freirean Pedagogy in Botswana | Context | Limitations of the Freirean Approach | Conclusion | References |

ABSTRACT

The article explores how the Freirean pedagogy can be employed to facilitate the transformation of rural Botswana. The Freirean approach is a strategy that can be adopted for assisting underprivileged sections of any society to enhance their consciousness and bring about change in their lives. The historical development in Botswana is assessed and it is concluded that the society is polarized into classes of the rich and the impoverished. Those who are poor are more often found in the rural areas. Freirean pedagogy is analyzed with the intention of showing that it can help the poor to break free of the shackles of poverty, negative self concept and the culture of silence within which they have been enclosed for too long. It would enhance their capacity to challenge the "dehumanizing" aspects of their lives through dialogue. The Botswana context is viewed as conducive because there are both Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations that can facilitate the process of change among the rural people if they adopt this approach. The Botswana Government is gradually becoming aware of the limitations of planning for people and not with them. Therefore, as it is planning to involve the people, the Freirean approach is viewed as essential to help to prepare the people for their future role as participants planning in development. Finally, a critical overview of the method is given to show its limitations, especially, that it can be used by conservatives to meet their own ends. This is intended to caution practitioners against being manipulated if the approach is adopted.

CE 075 168

INTRODUCTION

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The use of Freirean pedagogy among the oppressed sections of society as a subject of discourse and research appears to be gaining favor among adult literacy researchers, administrators and practitioners in the Western and developing nations (Freire and Shor, 1987; Freire and Maccido, 1987; Shor, 1987; Gadotti, 1994; and Freire, 1990). The purpose of this article is to examine the possibilities of employing Freirean methods to enable the rural population in Botswana to address issues of poverty, unemployment, lack of skills and political voice, economic deprivation and illiteracy that beset them. The basic thesis is that the method has the potential to assist the people to transform themselves within their context. A related assumption is that this approach can be used fruitfully in a class society especially among the deprived sections of the nation.

The article provides a historical overview of development trends in Botswana and demonstrate how the development process has excluded the rural poor. Then a brief discussion of the Freirean pedagogy and its methods is provided with emphasis on those principles that could be applicable to the Botswana context. The Botswana situation is analyzed with a focus on the development of education and in particular adult literacy. Efforts are made to justify why there is a possibility for the Freirean methods to be adopted and used in the transformation of rural Botswana, even though most of the success stories so far appear to be from socialist countries.

BACKGROUND

Botswana attained political Independence from Britain in 1966. The social and economic infrastructure was underdeveloped. However, Botswana's economy boomed at unprecedented rates compared to other states in Sub Saharan Africa. The Gross Domestic Product increased four fold in real terms from 1966 to 1991. In 1966 Botswana's GDP was 313 million Pula, mainly from British aid and grants, and by 1993 it had grown to a total of 8,329 million Pula (Ebun-Cole, 1995). The country maintained a relatively high growth rate based on the discovery and exploitation of mineral wealth. The rapid growth has however been accompanied by high income inequality and the persistence of poverty, both absolute and relative particularly, in the rural and periurban areas (Maruatona and Adeola, 1995). The 1985/86 Household Income and Expenditure Survey estimated that 64% of the households were living below the poverty datum line (Datta, 1995: 3). This corroborated an earlier report of the Rural Income Distribution Survey of 1974/75 which concluded that 54% of the rural households were living below poverty line (Inger, 1992). Ebun-Cole (1995: 8) in a paper presented at a workshop on "Planning Sustainable Rural Development in Botswana" captured the degree of disparities when he observed that:

While Botswana has registered significant economic growth that has resulted in greater employment opportunities, the provision of social services and increased average standards of living of the population (GDP per Capita in 1991/92=P5700 approximately $2700) over the last two decades, distribution has been very much uneven. The Household and Income Expenditure Survey of 1985/86 indicated that the top 20% of the households earned 61.5% of the total cash income, the middle 40% earned 27.8% while the bottom and poorest 40% earned only 10.7%.

ADULT LITERACY IN RURAL BOTSWANA

Rural Botswana constitute most of the people who are sharing the 10.7% of the national income. These people like most of the rural populations in the developing world, are not actively participating in the development process because of policies that tend to have an urban bias (Datta, 1995; George and Lawson, 1980). (Ebun-Cole 1995:5) noted that:

> with limited opportunity for income earning in the rural areas, Botswana's overwhelmingly rural and agricultural dependent population... has dwindled due to migration of, predominantly its labor force to urban areas in search of better prospectsjobs created due to the demand of industry.

The trend is likely to continue unless measures are taken to improve the situation in the rural areas. The rural areas could

be made more habitable through multiple strategies like provision of effective literacy with a functional aspect and social and economic incentives.

The roots of this situation can be traced back to the colonial period when the limited educational infrastructure that was there was operated by the church and was intended to select a few "collaborators" who were coopted to be allies of the colonial system (Youngman, 1986; Turok, 1987). After Independence, the state was confronted with a large proportion of the population that was illiterate. This posed a very critical challenge for the Government and it made a considerable effort to combat illiteracy that was perceived to impede participation in the development process by those who were not literate. The call for the "empowerment" of the rural people also emanates from the fact that the state has already acknowledged that a literate society is essential if Botswana's other development goals are to be achieved. The Report of the National Commission on Education (1977) indicated that:

> A fully literate population is an important long term objective if Botswana's other national objectives are to be met. We do not emphasize literacy as a separate program, because experience in other countries indicates that literacy should not be pursued in isolation from other development programs, as an end itself. It is best acquired in the context of efforts to achieve greater productivity, health or control over one's environment and, indeed, it will itself contribute to achievement of these objectives.

This demonstrates that Government appreciates literacy as essential in the development of the country especially the rural areas. The above report paradoxically did not have any recommendation on literacy among its long list of recommendations. It only stated that "consideration will be given to literacy." However, the high rates of illiteracy made the Government to embark on a massive literacy program. The National literacy Program (NLP) was launched in 1981 with the following objectives:

> To enable 250,000 presently illiterate men, women and youth to become literate in Setswana and numerate over six years 198085.
> The teaching to be understood in the context of development issues relevant to the respective Districts and Nation.

The term "literacy" to be interpreted to imply that a person can comprehend those written communications and simple computations which are part of their daily life (Ministry of Education, 1979)

The effort was intended to credit the Botswana welfare state as a way of showing its commitment to the needs of the people. This countered the argument that the success of a mass literacy program is possible only under a socialist state. Some scholars sought to demonstrate that literacy program can actually work in capitalist states and Botswana was singled out as an example of a successful literacy program under a capitalist political economy. (Townsend-Coles 1988:108) observed that Botswana has "been one of the few countries that adopted a capitalist mode of production but has actually implemented a successful literacy program without any dictation. This is proof that a program can be developed and maintained without any socialist dictation and rattling of political slogans."

However the program has not been entirely successful and it has experienced some problems of drop outs. This has been attributed to lack of time to attend because of other social responsibilities and irrelevance of the content to the needs of the learners (Omoding-Okwalinga, 1993). Consequently, the functional skills aspect was introduced to make it more responsive. The first attempt to include practical skill training in literacy was stated in the National Development Plan 6, (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1985) which also sought a link between the NLP and the Primary Schools. The young literacy graduates were to enroll in primary schools. A program on basic literacy and skill training for incomegenerating activities for older graduates was also incorporated. This was intended to increase educational and employment opportunities for the graduates and also to reduce inequalities in access to education and work (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1985). The redefined objectives of the National Literacy Program were spelt out in the National Development Plan 6, (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning 1985) as follows:

To help the learning needs of communities in the rural and remote areas for adult who never had a chance to go to school... and for children who are living in villages without schools.

The Department will expand its nonformal activities beyond reading, writing and numeracy. The needs of rural communities in terms of skills required for income generating activities will form the basis for expansion (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1985:158)

These objectives focused primarily on the rural areas which signaled the fact that Government was beginning to admit that the rural people were being left out in the development process. It attributed this state of affairs to illiteracy among other things.

In a similar vein the Report of the current National Commission on Education (1993:285) recommended that the provision of outofschool education, of which literacy is a part is intended "to increase the ability of adults to take part in social, political, cultural and sporting affairs in order to improve their quality of life and promote greater participation in the development process." Participation can be facilitated successfully through the adoption of the Freirean approach to the teaching of adults in order to enable the poor and illiterate to take an active part in the planning process in the future. Otherwise, they will continue to be excluded in spite of Government's commitment to involving them in the development process. The National Commission on Education (1993) stressed unequivocally that it is essential to provide access to learning opportunities outside of the main structures of schooling in order to benefit those who lacked access to basic education in the past. This demonstrates a more concretized commitment to the provision of adult basic education to those who have been excluded by the present arrangement. The 1993 report came up with several recommendations on outofschool education which the state endorsed through its subsequent White Paper (Revised National Policy on Education, 1994).

The 1987 evaluation of Botswana National Literacy Program indicated that in spite of successes in enrollments there was need to review the curriculum and reinvigorate the teaching and learning processes (Gaborone, Mutanyatta and Youngman, 1987). The National Commission on Education (1993:278) accepted the position and further observed that it is the "task which remains to be done." It is this state of affairs that stimulates the attempt to explore how the Freirean approach can be used as one of the strategies that could be employed to tackle this problem. It would "empower" the learners and help them to develop a critical view about their situation. It is assumed that the current thinking about the desire to include the rural people in their development is genuine. It is hoped that the proposals will not be like most state initiated policies which were just meant to persuade the deprived majority to be patient, while, the rulers were self aggrandizing and enriching themselves to the extent illustrated in the introduction. The government and the people have to be committed to change. Experiences from Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guinea Bissau and Tanzania indicate that willingness on the part of the state to accede to change and transformation is an essential ingredient for the fruition of the Feirean approach under various circumstances.

The Botswana National Literacy Program was intended for the rural poor who are mainly landless peasants, virtually enslaved by a system that denies them a just economic return for their labor. This section of the population constitutes the biggest portion of the poorest of the poor in the country. They have the highest child mortality and the lowest life expectancy. They lack access to adequate food, clean water and sanitation. They are preoccupied with just how to provide their daily bread because all their earnings put together are not enough to satisfy their survival needs. They are educationally disadvantaged, socially deprived, fall prey to malnutrition and political demagoguery. They have limited access to health care and information on preventable diseases (Ubun-Cole, 1995). They possess only their manual power and intellectual potential, attributes which can always be reactivated through Freirean praxis.

The rural poor's potential predisposes them to being conscientized and liberated from oppression and their negative self concept (Freire, 1990). They need liberatory literacy to enable them to explore new possibilities in themselves and their environment. This should help them to break free of structural restrictions they experience along economic, social, gender and ethnic lines.

FREIREAN PEDAGOGY AND METHODS

Freirean Pedagogy has the potential to help these people to transform themselves from a sluggish rural economy with declining living standards, and "a situation where they are passive recipients of development assistance" (Fong, 1995:3). The approach would provide them with the tools for self realization and "empowerment." Gadotti (1994:122) observed that:

> Paulo Freire's pedagogy has acquired a universal meaning because the oppressor/oppressed relationship which he examined occurs throughout the world and his theories have been enriched with the most varied experiences from many countries.

The fact of the matter is that Freirean methods enhance the potential of the marginalized people to challenge the status quo as they engage them in a uniquely transformative and dialogic process (Freire, 1972, 1990; Freire and Shor, 1987; Freire and Maccido, 1987 and Gadotti, 1994). Gadotti (1994:50) captured the essence of this dialogic process by stating that "the first virtue of dialogue is to respect those who are being educated not only as people but also in the way they are considered as examples of social practice." The arrangement enables the learners to learn from their own experiences which liberates them from the bondage of negative self concept thus, ushers them into a new freedom of expression. The pedagogy enables them to critique their present situation and to suggest how they can overcome their needs. The point is that this pedagogy is done in both individual and community contexts (Freire and Shor, 1987). A closer analysis of the Freirean pedagogy shows how the methods could be applied in the transformation of the rural people.

Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educator, political activist, and writer. Freire has a strong belief in human potentialities. He believes that given a choice, human beings can improve their conditions through political education. Freire's methods has been portrayed as more than a teaching method but a theory of education and a philosophical outlook (Gadotti, 1994). His thought emanates partly from Marxist traditions which emphasized the need for the exploited to be mobilized against their oppressors and to overthrow them. Freire in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed argued that society is polarized into the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressor uses education to "domesticate" the oppressed. This is the kind of education that facilitates control and thrives on banking knowledge into the heads of the learners who are presumed not to know anything. Freire wrote and taught against banking education in Brazil and elsewhere.

As an alternative, Freire proposed liberating education which is based on engaging in dialogue with the learners about their situation and helping them to question their condition of oppression. The oppressed's condition of existence is the "culture of silence." Liberating education raises the learners' consciousness and inculcates the capacity for them to exercise control on their lives. The teacher engages in dialogue with the learners which gives the learners a chance to express their problems at the 'cultural circles.' (Freire, 1976, 1977, 1978). This is unlike a formal classroom which is arranged in rows. Shor (1987) observed correctly that rows isolate both the learners and the teachers and they limits the potential for a rich dialogic exchanges of views.

In this context then, the teacher should not see himself or herself as having to deposit knowledge into the heads of the learners. In order for transformative pedagogy to be realized, there should be dialogue between the educators and the learners. The learners' experiences should constitute a crucial part of the learning process in both formal and out of class settings if this pedagogy is to be transformative. The learners should be encouraged to air their views on the current situation in order to help them to identify the generative themes that would form the basis for the discussion in 'cultural circles.' These are groups of learners who decide with the facilitators what they are going to learn as a group and the teacher further develop the theme for discussion (Gadotti, 1994). The generative themes are derived from the educator's observation and informal discussions with the potential learners about their world view point. The teachers code the words into pictures and photographs, this latter forms the basis for pedagogic interaction with the learners (Freire, 1976).

Generative themes form the moral culture for discussion and stimulate ideas. They spell out the aims of the talk and suggests steps to be taken in the discussion. All these would help rural Botswana to feel that they are part of the process

and develop a political voice which they were denied under the current literacy efforts which is bent to facilitate 'domestication'. Generative themes then, as (Freire 1990:97) pointed out:

> cannot be found in men, divorced from reality; nor in reality divorced from men;...it can only be apprehended in the menworld relationship to investigate the generative theme is to investigate man's thinking about reality and man's action upon reality, which is his praxis.

The participation is not only an act of democracy but it is also efficient as the content conveys the felt needs of the participants and motivates them to learn more (Gadotti, 1994). Harman (1987) asserted that literacy can not be forced on people, the desire for its acquisition has to come from the people themselves.

My view is that the congeniality of the political climate is a necessary prerequisite for the realization of a transformative pedagogy. If the appropriate methods are not followed, then, the cultural and attitudinal changes will not occur among the rural people. The Government and other agencies should strive to be humanistic in their approach. They should advocate freedom of expression and organization because these are both political and educational. The teacherstudent relationship in the learning situation should be horizontal so that there is a deliberate effort to get the teachers and the students to learn from one another as a necessary aspect of their interaction in class. (Mayo 1993:23) makes the observation that "the process of transformative education has to alter the topbottom mode of communication ...and give due recognition to popular culture rendering it\them the basis of their learning." The issue is that this goes beyond educational communication to participation in matters of national concern by those who have been excluded.

Mayo (1993) recognizes the political nature of Freirean literacy methods. They are intended to do away with undemocratic social relations and replace them with democratic structures among the rural people. Freirean methods are based on the inculcation of critical consciousness. (Freire 1976:37) commented that since "our traditional education is disconnected from life, centered on words emptied of reality...[it] could never develop a critical consciousness." The Freirean method would compensate for the current inability of the learners in the Botswana National Literacy Program to question their servitude and other issues that perpetrate their poverty.

FREIREAN PEDAGOGY IN BOTSWANA

The present literacy practice in Botswana does not facilitate criticism of the participant's current situation and the need for them to be agents of change. Freire's methods would enable them to engage in democratic practice like other citizens of Botswana. The process can do that because democracy is founded on the belief in people, and that "they not can, but should discuss the problems of their country" (Freire, 1976:38). The methods are intended to help the learners to be critical of their current reality and to see the justification to institute change (Freire, 1977).

The argument is that in the current situation in Botswana, the Government has skillfully chosen some nonpolitical aspects of the Freirean approach for the Botswana National Literacy Program (Gaborone et al, 1987). The Government literacy curriculum developers carefully selected non controversial issues to be part of the primers. This gave them the chance to include the type of "generative words and themes" that would not challenge the status quo. These suggested activities therefore make education part of a broader process of predetermined social change which is not intended for transformation, consequently, it domesticates. Freirean pedagogy on the contrary is viewed as essential in bringing about transformation among the rural people.

The educator's role is to propound problems about the codified existential situation in order to help the learners to arrive at a more critical view of reality. Students should feel challenged to address the problems in their world (Freire, 1990). This enables people to learn to read and write reality without being confined to learning symbols of ba, be, le, ma etc. as is the case in the current Botswana National Literacy Program.

Educators should appreciate the fact that the learners are psychologically prepared to learn new and complicated things for as long as the facilitators start with their realities and proceed to articulate new concepts relating to their changing situation (Bonanni, 1980). Adult literacy learners are psychologically prepared to learn a limitless amount of information that would enable them to change their situation for the better and the Freirean approach would be quite helpful in facilitating this process of change.

The rural people in Botswana know the problems that are affecting them and what could be done to improve their situation. This pedagogy would provide a forum for the expression of their views. This approach is both appropriate and cost effective because it allows the people to suggest what could be best for them. Involving the learners makes programming not only relevant but responsive to the felt needs of the learners, and this is cardinal to Freirean pedagogy (Gadotti, 1994). This can be contrasted with the Botswana literacy program where administrators foster the teaching of what they think is what the learners need. One way in which the learners have demonstrated their dissatisfaction was through "dropping" from the program. Botswana still has a chance to learn from the blunders of other capitalist states and fruitful experiences of progressive states like Guinea-Bissau and Nicaragua which had successful literacy experiments based on this approach.

The viable strategies of this approach heighten the chances for the adoption of the Freirean pedagogy to facilitate transformation thorough literacy education in rural Botswana. However, it is evident that the conditions that allowed for 'domestication' are still there for as long as the conservative forces are still politically active. It will be shown that the international organizations and opposition parties in the country are mounting pressure on the state to succumb to change. The point is that bureaucrats are over time going to be willing to accept change as inevitable. If the approach is adopted it would further "empower" the dominated to demand that programs intended for their welfare be designed with them and not for them as is the practice at the moment. The Freirean method has the potential to help the rural people to perform the responsibility of transforming their lives. The literacy program in Botswana can only work if the potential learners are the ones who contribute to the issues to be "dialogued" about in the program.

Freire strongly believes that education is not a value free and neutral assemblage of knowledge intended for the common good (Apple, 1993). It can be used by the dominant class to exert its control over the dominated groups. In this instance, the facilitators must enter into the cultural universe of the learners in order to be able to dialogue with them about the possibilities for the transformation of their lives. Freire observed that there is no neutral education: "education is either for domestication or for freedom" (Freire, 1976:9). While this position seems convincing on the surface, it is actually reductionist. It ignores the ways in which the oppressed could question the dominant knowledge system and read their own realities into essentially conservative programs (Apple, 1990; Maruatona, 1995).

The most important factor in literacy education is not reading, writing and computing without any critical comprehension of the social context to which they refer (Freire, 1976: 23). Education therefore should not be divorced from the learners' productive activities and their culture. This requires that an adult educator should communicate with the learners to enable them to understand their system of knowledge and structural syntax (Bonanni, 1980). Freire and Shor (1987) indicated that liberatory education gives the oppressed a political voice and enables them to engage in learning for social and personal transformation.

Freirean pedagogy is essential for helping the majority of the rural people in Botswana who are subjected to political manipulation and have no voice in the democratic process. The Freirean method would enable them to live and practice genuine democracy as opposed to the type where they only take part in elections every five years as is the case in Botswana at the moment. The present practice is intended to legitimate the ruling class as it gives the world the impression that Botswana is democratic because people vote regularly. This is intended for the legitimization of the state (Habermas, 1973). Freirean pedagogy however, would enable the presently illiterate and poor people to develop a critical consciousness that would facilitate their freedom and effective participation through enhancing their capacity to comprehend the manipulative potential of the ruling elite.

The pedagogy can make the presence of civic society like the trade unions, farmers associations, church groups and cooperative societies to be felt under certain circumstances. It is contended that in the context of democratic Botswana, it is possible to mobilize the rural peasants under the literacy agenda and use the Freirean approach to "empower" them. Recently, there has been the emergence of a considerable body of literature from the western industrialized countries which purports to demonstrates that this approach is crucial for social change because it has a lot of potential for those

who are underprivileged even in the "developed nations." This is particularly so among the racial minorities, women, and the underclass (Rockhill, 1987; Freire and Macedo, 1987).

CONTEXT

Freire's pedagogy apparently can bring about the desired goals of liberation, "empowerment" and consciousness building under certain conditions and not others (Mayo, 1993). After the 1964 coup in Brazil, Freire was forced to go into exile because the military rulers felt threatened by his influence on the oppressed masses. In spite of his absence, his ideas were used by the churches to mobilize the rural population against military dictatorship. The argument is that under certain circumstances the pedagogy does not work as smoothly as anticipated, as it was the case under the military junta in Brazil. The regime did not cherish democratic ideals. Freire moved to Chile, where his experiment succeeded because the state was committed to bringing change to the lives of the people, particularly the rural population. The state endorsed literacy education as an aspect of a strategy for social transformation. It had to be done with the full understanding that literacy needed to be complemented by other social policies if it were to work. The point is that the operationalization of the Freirean pedagogy will vary from context to context.

Botswana is suited for this kind of approach to rural mobilization and education because after Independence, Botswana inherited and created viable democratic institutions that can be mobilized for the purposes of addressing this rural dilemma. These includes such institutions as the "Kgotla" (community meeting place) which facilitated exchange of views among the communities during the precolonial period even though it had limitation like exclusion on the grounds of ethnic and gender affiliation (Ncgoncgo, 1989). However it can be used to mobilize people to dialogue about issues of concern in their community. The post colonial state continued with this institution albeit reducing its power.

The Botswana farmers have a tradition of working in groups. This is called the call or (letsema) The community works for a particular family during weeding, harvesting or any activity. The host family is expected to provide food for the "workers" for that day. The next time it rotates over to the other household. The point is that they worked as a group. This would be in line with the Freirean idea of "cultural circles."

The state introduced some institutions in the rural areas to assert itself and further its legitimacy under the pretext of development. These are Village Development Committees, Village Extension Teams, and Village Health Teams and District Extension Teams. Note that the agenda for the groups are set along the Governmental guidelines. It also helped in the formation of Civic Organizations like Farmer's Associations, Red Cross, and Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), and the Consumer Cooperatives. The people also have Churches of their choice. These organizations have their goals other than for social transformation. The argument is that these institutions can foster exchange of views among people if they can adopt aspects of the Freirean method intended to facilitate change of views among the poor. The high rates of income disparities and the generally high levels of unemployment can persuade these institutions e.g. the Churches, to change their focus from merely soul saving to "empowerment". The case of the Churches in Brazil cited above is instructional and Freire himself had a Christian background that informed his thoughts and beliefs about human potentials.

In their various ways these social movements can help the poor to survive the problems of poverty and inequality to which they have been subjected by the state's inegalitarian policies. If these organizations and associations adopt the Freirean approach, they can mobilize the various rural groups against exploitation. They can mobilize the agrarian workers against the commercial farmers who keep them under subhuman conditions (Maruatona, 1988). The poor in the rural areas recognize these organizations as essential for their lives. Therefore they could be used as the basis for their mobilization.

The development trends between rural and urban Botswana are uneven (Fong, 1995) but in spite of that there are still some strong ties between the urban and rural population. It should be observed that rural dwellers have cultural ties with the urban people. They relate as parents, relatives, wives, and husbands. The links could be used for the mobilization of the rural poor because the urban residents already appreciate the value of literacy so they can help to mobilize their rural

counterparts. The Freirean approach would help to mobilize the poor and empower them to facilitate their liberation from exploitation, deprivation and poverty through developing their capacity to critique their situation and to change it.

One should not be misconstrued for suggesting that this pedagogy will single handedly solve structural problems of poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and unsanitary conditions in which the poor are immersed at the moment in rural Botswana. (Freire 1976: 24) cautioned that "merely teaching men to read and write does not perform miracles, if there are not enough jobs for men able to work, teaching more men to read and write will not create them." However, the transformation process would enable them to have and convey message to the rulers about their demise as a deprived group in an otherwise affluent society. The state proclaims itself to be committed to the principles of 'democracy, social justice and equity (National Commission on Education, 1977) and to the general alleviation of poverty in the rural areas. Consequently, the transformed rural dwellers would pressurize the state to adapt aspects of this pedagogy to further transform the rural people. It should be reiterated that education alone can not create jobs, there has to be a political will to adhere to social transformation on the part of the Government and non governmental organizations in the country if the Freirean pedagogy is to be of any worth to the rural people.

The Government of Botswana is democratic as demonstrated by its commitment to the ideals of social justice and equity and it has made efforts to facilitate rural development since 1972 (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1995). The Rural Development Division of the Ministry of Finance has began to appreciate the problems of the overtly centralized approach to planning that is used currently. Presenting a background paper to the workshop on Planning Rural Development, they indicated that there are socioeconomic and environmental problems of varying degrees that still remain persistent in the rural areas. These include among other things, rural poverty, and unemployment, high population growth, ruralurban disparities, and the poor situation of women and other vulnerable groups. This indicates that there is need for the devolution of the decision making process from the center to the periphery. The workshop participants indicated that there was need for the state to decentralize the planning process in order to plan with the people and not for them. This can be realized only if the rural people are sufficiently "empowered" to participate in this process.

The argument is that the proposed decentralization can not just be wished for, preparations have to be made in advance. It is against that background that the Feirean pedagogy is being suggested as one strategy that could help in the mobilization of the rural poor in Botswana to enable them to be active participants in development. The Freirean method would make the adult learners subjects not passive objects of their learning. The process would help them to become active participants in the development process that is intended for the improvement of their lives.

However, there is a growing tendency to have a widening gap between the urban and the rural areas. EbunCole (1995) has indicated that the main problem is that the planning does not allow the rural people to take an active part. The missing link is that the rural people are not prepared to participate effectively. This could be because they are not sufficiently empowered to do so. The Freirean pedagogy is one strategy that could prepare them for effective participation in development. Mayo (1993) has illustrated that the approach can be adopted to reform the curriculum of a literacy program and reinvigorate it to make it more responsive to the varied realities of the rural poor in different situations. This is more so in Botswana with its diverse ethnic composition and varied geographical locations. The differences between communities need to be acknowledged in literacy teaching but to date this has been very minimal.

The Freirean pedagogy proceeds from the premise that the difference has to be acknowledged and valued because it would help in the selection of content and methods. The point is that Freirean method does not start with a preconceived content as is the case in the Botswana Literacy Program, the content is a result of dialogue between the learners and facilitators.

The Government of Botswana has adopted the non political aspects of the method for the National Literacy Program (Gaborone et al, 1987). This is because contrary to the Freirean approach, the state decides on what is to be in the primers without consulting the potential learners. They are then made to "dialogue" about these issues. The emphasis is ultimately on the mechanical rote learning of concepts such as ba, be, le, ma, etc. with minimal discussion, which Freire criticizes as banking education.

However, In my view the Freirean approach is an indispensable strategy that could help in the "empowering" of rural people. It could liberate them from the bondage of negative self concept and the "culture of silence" to which they were

confined by exclusion over the years. This section should be ended with an appropriate word of caution from Freire (1976) who observed that we should not expect education to do miracles or to do what it can not do, that is to "transform society by itself." Education on its own will not provide a panacea to the problems that face the rural people. Solving the problems of the rural poor in Botswana will take more than education as experiences from elsewhere has shown. This however, does not diminish the immense contribution which education can make to the lives of the currently illiterate rural people in Botswana.

The action and reflection (praxis) should lead to fundamental changes in the political, economic, social and individual conditions of these people. It should be reiterated that transformation can only be achieved through a visible challenge to the privileges of those in control of the state. In Botswana, the pressure would come from the opposition which gained ground during the 1994 elections. The other factor is that the state over the years have used its control of the resources to allocate them to subordinated classes. These benefits includes the provision of social services in the rural areas (Youngman, 1995). The decline of the economy does not allow the continuation of this dependency and this necessitates initiative on the part of the rural dwellers.

Another development is that international organizations are now dealing directly with civic organizations without Government involvement. For example, NORAD, and the British Partnership Scheme, seem to be moving in the direction of working directly with grassroots community organizations. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) sponsored by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), The United Nation Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Bank, provides grants for small scale activities in environmental conservation provided by the NGOs, NGO Networks, People's Associations and Community groups.

In Botswana, the civil society for a long time has been very weak and had little space for achieving their independent development. The state has used its power to ensure that the civic organizations do not gain autonomy through grassroots democratic development (Youngman, 1995). Youngman's argument is reductionist in that it assumes that the state was successful in exerting control over the lives of the subordinated groups. This is questionable in that these groups have always managed to organize against the state, the Brigades in the 1970's and the mine workers in Selibe-Phikwe in 1975 challenged the control of the state. They were suppressed, but the point is that they indicated the potential for resistance by the dominated. The adoption of the Freirean approach by the grassroots organizations to educate their membership would help them to achieve the goal of transforming the poor into a politically and economically vibrant and self sustaining community that could actually challenge the status quo.

LIMITATIONS OF THE FREIREAN APPROACH

While one endorses the Freirean methods and strategies, it should be pointed out that the methods have some limitations. One of the substantive criticisms of Freire's works has been done by Youngman (1986). He pointed to the fact that Freire's position is eclectic, which predisposes it to being ambiguous, contradictory and incoherent, and that it has been used by liberals essentially for conservative ends. He concludes that socialists can use Freirean pedagogy for as long as they are able to detect its aspects that are politically disabling. The argument is that deprived groups under capitalist formations can use the Freirean method to transform themselves.

The methods are based on a questionable assumption that the rural learners have the capacity to identify and comprehensively articulate their felt needs, which might not be true. A question also needs to be posed with regard to the assumption that conventionally trained teachers would want to learn from the learners, which might not necessarily be the case. This necessitates a thorough retraining of the teachers on this method before they can be expected to carry out this pedagogy effectively. The other problem with this approach is that it does not demonstrate the extent of the dialogue to be carried out if it is to be transformative. This lends the approach to being "abused" by the conservative to perpetrate banking education.

Experiences from elsewhere indicate that the Freirean methods are adopted in capitalist countries like Botswana for a totally different end and with very little effort to contextualize them. This does not facilitate transformation of the

learners. This results in large scale withdrawals of learners from the programs particularly those intended to serve essentially conservative ends like the Botswana National Literacy Program. Therefore if this approach is to be utilized for the transformation of rural Botswana, necessary preparations have to be made to adapt the methods to the context. This requires the acknowledgment of the fact that literacy is a political process that can facilitate social change and transformation in spite of its limitations.

CONCLUSION

This article has appraised the conditions of the rural people in Botswana and argued that in spite of praises from the West about Botswana's commitment to the ideals of democracy and equity there is abject and relative poverty. The rural populace's conditions deteriorated drastically since Independence. The people are subjected to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, poor sanitation and lack of authentic political voice. This situation necessitates a fundamental change to their lives which could be brought about by the adoption of the Freirean method for the National Literacy Program.

However, no pretense should be made that education on its own can bring about change or transformation. Closely related to this is the fact that the state seems to admit that the current approach to planning is not effective in involving the people and that there is need to include them even more. This is why the Freirean approach is to be adopted so that it can be reflected upon to see its usefulness as an alternative to the current practice, which has not transformed the learners.

The state and NGOs have to be willing to bend to the demands of their constituents at national and district levels. Freirean strategies could be employed to achieve the goal of social transformation and "empowerment" of the rural people in Botswana. This depends on the potential of the people to question the "dehumanizing" aspects of their lives and articulate their realities in a transformative way, this is universal (Freire, 1976).

The Freirean pedagogy, its methods and limitations have been analyzed and it is concluded that the context of rural Botswana seems suitable for this approach given that the Government intends to involve the people more in policy formulation and implementation through decentralization.

The proposition about decentralization will remain empty rhetoric if the groundwork is not done by involving the rural people in a transformative process as an aspect of the preparatory stage. The article suggests the use of the Freirean pedagogy not as a blueprint but as one of the strategies that could be employed in implementing the intended involvement of the people in decision making. This approach is perceived to have a lot of potential to help rural Botswana to facilitate their transformation.

REFERENCES

APPLE, MICHAEL W. *Ideology and the Curriculum.* New York. Routledge.: 1979. 2nd Edition. New York. Routledge, 1990.

APPLE, MICHAEL W. *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Society.* London: Routledge, 1993.

DATTA, ANSU. *Rural Poverty in Botswana.* A Paper presented at the National Rural Development Planning Workshop, Gaborone, 20th-24 March, 1995.

EBUN-COLE, WILFRED. *Rural Urban Relationship: An Analytical Review with a Focus on Botswana.* A paper prepared for the National Rural Development Planning Workshop, Gaborone, 20th-24 March, 1995.

FONG, ELIZABETH. Key Note Address at the opening of a National Rural Development Planning Workshop, Gaborone, 20th-24th March, 1995.

FREIRE, PAULO. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum Publishing.: 1972. 2nd Edition New York: Continuum, 1990.

FREIRE, PAULO. *Education: The Practice of Freedom.* London: Writers and Readers Publishers, 1976.

FREIRE, PAULO. *Cultural Action For Freedom.* London: Penguin, 1977.

FREIRE, PAULO. *Pedagogy in Process.* London: Writers and Readers Publishers, 1978.

FREIRE, PAULO. and MACEDO, D. *Listening: Reading the Word and the World.* Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1987.

FREIRE, PAULO. and SHOR, IRAH. *Pedagogy For Liberation; Dialogues for Transforming Education.* Grenby: Bergin and Garvey, 1987.

GABORONE, SAMORA, MUTANYATTA, JOHANNES and YOUNGMAN, FRANK. *An Evaluation of The National Literacy Program.* Gaborone: Institute of Adult Education, 1987.

GADOTTI, MOCCIR. *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work.* New York : New York University Press, 1994.

HARMAN, DAVID. *Illiteracy: A National Dilemma.* London: The Adult Education Company, 1987.

HITCHCOCK, RICHARD. *The Rural Population Living Outside Designated Villages* . A paper presented at a Botswana Society workshop on "Sustainable Rural Development," Gaborone 13th-15th March, 1992.

INGER, DAVID. *Changing Patterns of Rural Income Distribution* . A paper presented at a Botswana Society workshop on "Sustainable Rural Development" Gaborone 13th-15th March, 1992.

MARUATONA, TONIC and ADEOLA, TONY. *Literacy and Poverty Alleviation: The case of Botswana.* A paper present at a National Literacy Forum, held at the University of Botswana, June 15th, 1995, unpublished.

MARUATONA, TONIC. *A Historical Analysis of the Conditions of the Farm Labourers in Freehold Farms: A Case of the Tuli Block.* Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of a B.A. Degree, University of Botswana, 1988, Unpublished.

MARUATONA, TONIC. "Hegemony and the Curriculum Process: A Critique of the Curriculum Development and Implementation in Botswana." Mosenodi., 2, (1994), 1532.

MAYO, PETER. "When Does It Work? Freire's Pedagogy in Context," Studies in the Education of Adults. 25, 1, (1993), 11-30.

Ministry of Education The Eradication of Illiteracy in Botswana A National Initiative Consultation Document. Gaborone: Department of Non Formal Education, 1979.

Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Sustaining Rural Development in Botswana. A Background Paper prepared for the National Rural Development Planning Workshop Gaborone, 20th 24 March, 1995.

National Commission on Education Report of the National Commission on Education. Gaborone: Government Printer,

1993.

National Commission On Education Report of the National Commission on Education Gaborone: Government Printer, 1977.

NCGONCGO, LEONARD. "Tswana Political Tradition: How Democratic?" in Holm, J. and Molutsi, P. (eds.) Democracy in Botswana. Gaborone: Macmillan, 1989, pp. 42-47.

NEUBAUER DA SILVA, TERESA. and EPOSITO, LUCIA. "Literacy the Challenges of the 90's," in Distance Education: Development and Access. Caracas: Open Learning Agency, 1990, pp. 143-152.

OMODING OKWALINGA, JAMES. "Withdrawal From Literacy Classes: A Study of Adult Male Sample from Botswana, Kenya and Malawi," Mosenodi., 2, 1993, 49-59.

ROCKHILL, KATHLEEN. "Gender, Language and Literacy," British Journal of Sociology of Education , 8, (1), 1987, 153-167.

TOWNSEND COLES, EDWARD. *Let the People Learn: The Establishment of The Department of Non Formal Education in Botswana and the Launching of the National Literacy Program.* Manchester: Manchester University, 1988.

YOUNGMAN, FRANK. "The State, Adult Literacy Policy and Inequality in Botswana," in Welch, A. R. (Ed.) Quality and Equality in Third World Education. New York, Garland, (Forthcoming).

YOUNGMAN, FRANK . *The Political Economy of Adult Education and Development: The Case of Botswana, 1966-1991.* A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Hull, 1995, Unpublished.

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY INSTITUTE, University of Pennsylvania, 3910 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3111 USA; Telephone 215-898-2100; Fax 215-898-9804;
E-mail: ili@literacy.upenn.edu
URL: http://www.literacyonline.org